

Wireless Local Number Portability

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

For years, consumers with wireline phones have been able to switch from one local carrier to another while at the same location without having to change their phone numbers. Now, this service will be available to wireless phone customers as well.

Under the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) wireless "local number portability" (LNP) rules, you can switch wireless carriers within the same geographic area and keep your existing phone number. Note, however, that if you are moving from one geographic area to another, you may not be able to port the number. In addition to switching from one wireless carrier to another, in most cases, you will be able to switch from a wireline carrier to a wireless carrier, or from a wireless carrier to a wireline carrier and still keep your phone number.

Initiating the Process

If you want to change carriers:

- Do not terminate your service with your existing carrier **before** initiating service with the prospective new carrier.
- Contact the prospective new carrier, who will start the process of porting by contacting your current carrier.
- You may request service from a new carrier at any time.
- Be aware that you are obligated to pay any early **termination fees** that you may have under your existing contract and any outstanding balance owed to your old carrier. Review your existing contract to determine what fees or charges apply. However, once you request service from the new carrier, your old carrier may not refuse to port your number, even if you owe money for an outstanding balance or termination fee.

Fees and Charges

- The FCC does not regulate the rates of wireless service providers because the wireless industry is very competitive. In most areas, consumers have many service provider and plan options available. Competition brings the lowest prices for consumers.
- Carriers are allowed to charge a fee to recover their "porting" costs. Carriers may or may not choose to charge a fee, and their fees may vary. If they do charge specific fees, the fees cannot exceed their porting costs.
- Even if carriers decide to charge for wireless LNP, they may not refuse to port a number because a consumer has not paid a porting fee.
- Additionally, some carriers may choose to pay the old carrier's costs of porting for the benefit of their new customers. **Ask your new carrier** whether it has a policy of paying or reimbursing these charges.

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The Adjustment Period

Your new carrier can usually give you a good idea about how long the process will take. In general:

- For a **wireless-to-wireless** transfer, your phone number should work within a few hours of your request to change wireless providers.
- A **wireline-to-wireless** transfer may take several business days to complete. **Ask your new carrier** whether you will be able to continue using your current wireline number during the transfer process.
- If you port from a **wireline phone to a wireless phone**, your wireline long distance carrier **will not** move with you. Your long distance service will generally be provided by your new wireless carrier, but you should verify this with the wireless carrier before changing service providers. For wireline-to-wireless porting, there may be a period of “mixed service” when you essentially have two telephones with the same number during the adjustment period.

Note: Certain rural wireline carriers may obtain waivers of the porting requirement from state commissions. Customers of these carriers therefore may be unable to port their number to a new carrier. The FCC Web site has a list of carriers which may be affected, as well as contact information for the state commissions. If you are unable to port your number for that reason, you should contact the state commission for further information.

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Emergency Services

In some areas, 911 operators automatically receive the phone number or location of a wireless call, but in many areas, that is not the case. Technology that will provide that information – Enhanced 911 or “E911” – is currently being implemented, but is not yet available using many wireless phones and in most parts of the country.

As noted above, during the porting process from the old carrier to the new carrier, there may be a period of “mixed service” - when you may have two telephones with the same number. During this time period, your E911 service may be affected: the call should go through, but, the 911 operator may not be able to call you back if the call gets disconnected. For this reason, before porting either a wireless or a wireline number, **ask the new carrier** how long the porting process will take and how the porting process will affect a call to 911 services.

Handsets and Special Services

In some instances, wireless **handsets** among different wireless service providers are incompatible. If you switch wireless service providers, you may need to purchase a new phone, even if you retain the same phone number. If you have concerns about purchasing a new phone **ask your new carrier** whether or not your current phone will work with that carrier’s network.

Also, be aware that in a few areas, as you roam, consumers with ported numbers may only be able to send and receive calls; other services, such as caller ID, may not function properly.

For additional information on wireless LNP, contact the FCC’s Consumer Center toll-free at:
 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice,
 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY, or
 visit our Web site at
www.fcc.gov/cgb/NumberPortability/. This factsheet may be updated to reflect future developments; we encourage you to check the web site for updates.



How to File a Complaint

You can file a complaint by e-mail (fccinfo@fcc.gov), the Internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html), call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY or mail.

Your complaint letter should include:

- name, address and telephone number where you can be reached during the business day;
- the telephone number involved with the complaint;
- as much specific information about the complaint as possible;
- a description of the steps you took to resolve the complaint;
- the names and telephone numbers of the company employees that you talked with in an effort to resolve the complaint, and the dates that you talked with these employees;
- copies of bills listing the disputed charges (circle the disputed charges on the copy of the bill); and
- the relief that you are requesting (such as adjustment of charges).

If you are mailing in a complaint, send the complaint to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs
Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints
Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

For More Information

For more information about other telecommunications-related subjects, please visit the FCC's Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb.

In addition, you can contact the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at
1-888-CALL-FCC
(1-888-225-5322) voice
or
1-888-TELL-FCC
(1-888-835-5322) TTY.

For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through **the Commission's electronic subscriber service**, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.*

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